

sonable restrictions, regulations or harassment from the public or private sector. We support actions to ensure that farmers are protected from undue liability and nuisance suits when carrying out normal production practices.

We recognize the efforts of the Maryland "Right - to - Farm" Law but believe that it should be strengthened.

We recommend that right-to-farm laws extend to the ag-supported industry, i.e. equipment dealers, grain and feed storage, processing, etc.

We also urge that it be evaluated and amended if necessary to make sure that the use of scare guns (for crop protection) is allowed. # 2001

#### **RIGHT-TO-WORK**

We encourage Maryland legislators to enact right-to-work legislation. Joining a union should not be a requirement in obtaining employment. We request that our elected officials continue to resist the efforts of organized labor to force compulsory unionism on industrial and public employees.

Firemen, policemen, emergency medical personnel and school system employees should have the right to collective bargaining, but not to strike so as not to limit these necessary services.

#### **RIPARIAN BUFFERS**

We favor voluntary incentive-based programs for establishing riparian buffers. Grass species or natural vegetation is preferred. When forest buffers are established provisions should be made for the future harvest of such trees without penalty.

In the event buffers are required to be established by individual landowners, fair and just compensation should be provided for planting, maintenance and loss of productive farmland. Compensation to landowners should be at 100% of the fair market value. #97

The width of riparian buffers should be decided on a case by case basis. #97

#### **ROAD CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE**

##### **Road Design**

We are concerned with the method in which the State of Maryland and certain counties have widened roads over the past few years. In some cases roads are widened to the extent that utility poles are surrounded by the blacktop road surface and culverts are in the main roadways.

We suggest the State and County Highway Administration study newly widened as well as existing roads and correct any dangerous conditions created by landowners placing objects too close to the roadway. (For example: steel objects, reflectors, ornamental fences, or trees). The increasing hazard of tree limbs hanging in the roadway or on the edge, makes it difficult to transport wide farm machinery. We recommend that trees and limbs be cut back a minimum of five (5) feet from the road edge.

We recommend that the State and County Highway Administrations consult the Maryland Department of Agriculture when designing islands or the placement of road signs and mailboxes so that they do not prohibit or make difficult the passage of farm machinery. (For example, signs or mailboxes should not be placed directly opposite each other on both sides of the road. Staggering signs and mailboxes on either side of a roadway provides more room for the passage of very large equipment.) We suggest that batteries of mailboxes be used where possible and placed off of the main road in new developments.

We believe that land involved in highway interchanges should be properly designed and landscaped so that it is free of sight obstructions, attractive and easily maintained.

No curbing should be placed on rural roads with less than 13 feet from the centerline to the curb.

##### **Road Construction**

An efficient highway system is of extreme importance to the economy of the state. We urge that a highway system, including adequate bridges, be built and maintained, to provide for the movement of goods and produce throughout the state. However, due to the high cost of highway construction, we recommend, where feasible, that existing roads and bridges be upgraded and improved instead of building new roads along different routes.

We encourage the State Highway Administration to install painted islands rather than concrete islands at intersections wherever feasible. #99

We urge that revenues from the highway fuel taxes be used for highway construction and maintenance only. #99

We believe that the state's share of the overall operation and maintenance cost of the mass transit systems should be limited to 25%, with 75% coming from the users and the local jurisdiction served by the system.

We urge the counties and state to enforce the law requiring anyone working along our roads to provide safety devices and personnel to insure safe travel, as the State Highway Department does.

State and County personnel should cut or prune bushes along the roadsides, if necessary, so that large equipment can move to the side to allow traffic to pass. #98

We encourage the State Highway Administration to proceed with urgently needed road construction projects. #99 We recommend that the State Highway Administration begin construction on a project within five (5) years after they acquire the land. Furthermore, we believe the owner of the land acquired should have the opportunity to use the land until the construction of the project has been initiated.

We urge that the State Highway Administration be more conscious of farmland when considering alternatives for improving public highways.

We are opposed to an increase in the State Fuel Tax. However, if there is a need for increased revenue the state should look at other sources. Also, any increase in revenue should only be used for maintaining roads and bridges.

#### **RURAL LEGACY PROGRAM**

Under the Rural Legacy Program agricultural production methods should not be prohibited and any restrictions to agriculture should not exceed the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

The Rural Legacy Program should be amended to permit, on a county by county basis, the use of Rural Legacy Program funds for the purchase of agriculture preservation easements. #97

We encourage the state to divide all rural legacy money equally among all counties in the state. #99

#### **SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES**

##### **School Standards**

We believe that more disciplinary authority should be returned to classroom teachers. School bus drivers being a part of the educational system should have the authority to refuse transportation of any student who makes a dangerous situation. Discipline is a concern of all and should be enforced by the school system.

We also support stricter qualifications and monitoring of teachers.

We support selective video camera monitoring on school buses as a necessary and reasonable safety measure.

We recommend educational programs at all levels to discourage people from engaging in illegal drug activity.

We also call for stronger disciplinary action for drug and alcohol elimination from our school system.

We recommend that all newly hired Maryland schoolteacher assistants meet certain State Board of Education testing and licensing standards.

Voluntary farm organizations such as Farm Bureau, FFA, 4-H and others have always been in the forefront in community service and relations. Therefore we encourage the repeal of the mandatory community service for high school students, and the enactment of a voluntary credited community service program.

##### **School Lunches**

The school lunch program was created to assure each school-age child the opportunity to have at least one nutritious meal each day. We resolve that the State and County Farm Bureaus should work to improve the standards and quality of food offered in Maryland public schools. We also recommend that all school cafeterias provide the students the opportunity for whole milk.

We urge the state to establish a farm-to-school program, which would allow for bidding exemptions, making it easier for schools and other institutions to buy directly from local farms. #2001

##### **School Year**

We urge the Maryland Legislature to investigate the present policy regarding the length of the school year and the use of 1/2 days to fulfill the obligation of a 180-day school year. We recommend that county school boards reconsider the value and length of each holiday in order to insure that the school year starts after Labor Day and ends no later than the first week of June.

We urge state legislators to implement this time period since there are foreign students entering the summer employment field in the U.S. taking our students' jobs. Also, students need to have time to show their 4-H and FFA animals and projects at fairs, without missing school time. #97

We are opposed to the recommendation of the Maryland State Board of Education to extend the school year to 200 days and we strongly recommend that the 180-day school year be retained. #98

Because of the contribution of the high school labor force and the resulting opportunity for youth to earn money, and to fulfill their community service requirement of the school curriculum, we oppose the year round and/or staggered school year policy now being discussed and planned.

##### **SEAT BELTS**

We are opposed to the expansion of the present seat belt laws to cover any other vehicles.

We recommend that all newly manufactured vehicles coming into the state have a standardized fastening and release system for seat belts.

##### **SEED CERTIFICATION**

We urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to expedite the process of seed certification so that farmers growing grain for seed may get it to market without prolonged storage.

##### **SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

We urge that the State Health Department re-evaluate their current regulations concerning septic systems and request that they provide flexibility that will eliminate undue economic hardship on landowners.

We oppose the mandatory installation of nitrogen removal systems because of the high costs and negligible benefits. #2000

##### **SEWAGE SLUDGE**

The use of municipal sludge on agricultural land has many potentially serious problems for today and the future. In order to protect both farmers and non-farmers, we urge the Maryland Department of the Environment to adopt and enforce regulations and guidelines for the land application of effluents and sewage sludge, in accordance with the recommendations made by the agricultural departments of the University of Maryland #2000. We believe that the controls should be based on a permit system which would be strictly monitored by local governments and health departments, and that each application be considered individually, and accepted or rejected on its own merits.

We urge that additional research, specifically a 20-year study, be done on the long-term effects of the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land, the farmers' potential liability and potential impacts to water quality. Also, we recommend that sludge should not be imported into Maryland from other states until this research has been completed.

We recommend the Maryland Department of the Environment and the applicator be held accountable and liable for any environmental or crop damage caused by the application of Maryland Department of Environment tested and approved sludge by a licensed applicator. #96

We recommend that random samples of sludge be collected in the field, and a composite test be taken and recorded each day.

We recommend heavy fines for those applicators that apply sludge over and above the recommended rates. This is to be strictly enforced.

Furthermore, we recommend that local governments keep a permanent record on land deeds of properties where sludge has been applied.

We recommend that a nutrient management plan be required before sewage sludge is applied and that the plan is followed and routinely updated. #96